

The Journey Home

Romans 15:24

A Collaborative Project of

KnittedTogetherByGod.com

The Journey Home: Romans 15:24

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The Journey Home

Romans 15:24

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A Heart-Filled Thanks,
Christine M. Miller-Ramey
Owner and Founder

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Chapter 1

Walking with God

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
which was made of the seed of David
according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God
with power, according to the spirit of holiness,
by the resurrection from the dead:
By whom we have received grace and apostleship,
for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:
Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:
To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father,
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:2-7

Continuous Training

*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:13-14*

If Paul, in Philippians, can say that he is still working toward and pressing forward in obtaining a relationship with God, then let's think about how much farther we need to go before we have "arrived." Heavenward is the word he uses to describe his goal for reaching the high prize—the calling of God in Christ Jesus.

In our walk with God, we never stop learning. If we think we have arrived spiritually and stop walking with God in prayer and in the study of His Word, we will deteriorate, slipping back and becoming like the rest of the world. It is so easy for us to fall back. When we do try to return from the backslidden position, we find it is often harder to recover the place we once had—a loving relationship with the Father.

In Prince Caspian of The Chronicles of Narnia, a series by C. S. Lewis, Aslan says, "Things never happen the same way twice." The path you took to walk with the Lord the first time around may not be the same path you choose to walk to return to Him now. Coming back to Christ after backsliding is often hard to do and that close relationship you once had will take time to rebuild. However, be careful of fallen back into the same trap again. Satan, will try anything to gain our hold. Nevertheless, we must seek the will of God and stay firm in the path He has chosen for us to avoid the hold Satan has had on us in the past. When we look to Him and concentrate on seeking and developing a relationship with Him our motives will begin to change. We will no longer want to walk in the destructive paths we once have followed. Instead, we will choose to live in the likeness of Christ.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;
and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33)

Oh, Lord Jesus, please make our focus on our relationship with you and seeking your kingdom first. Then everything else will fall into place. This bond that we are building with you needs to be so strong that no reward system becomes more important than the friendship and love we share with you. Oh, Lord, let us be focused on learning and becoming teachable, realizing that there is no "arrival" point on this earth. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pauline Creeden
Yorktown, VA

Everyday Necessity

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
Ephesians 6:10-11*

I have carpal tunnel syndrome. My wrists ache when I'm tired, and it becomes sore and numb in my sleep if I don't wear wrist braces to bed. This is fairly manageable compared to others who suffer the same medical condition. However, there are times when I grow tired of my nightly routine, and just desire to go to bed without my support braces.

Every time I do so, I wake up in the middle of the night numb and sore in my arms. You would think that I would have learned by now that I need to put on my support every time, not just sometimes as they are a necessary part of my life.

The armor of God is a necessary part of the Christian life.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities,
against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,
against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12-13)

Standing in one place is very difficult when we feel overwhelmed by the enemy. When everything in us is telling us to run away screaming in fear, it takes faith and trust in our armor to remain in a still and standing position.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,
and having on the breastplate of righteousness. (Ephesians 6:14)

When the truth of God surrounds us, and His righteousness covers our hearts, we can have faith that He is with us. With His promises over us, we will find the ability to stand.

And your feet shod with the preparation
of the gospel of peace. (Ephesians 6:15)

Shoes of peace can be fitted to our feet only when we walk in forgiveness. We are to forgive others as well as seek the forgiveness of others. In this peace, we will be ready.

Above all, taking the shield of faith,
wherewith ye shall be able to quench
all the fiery darts of the wicked. (Ephesians 6:16)

Only with our faith and trust in God can we remember that no matter what lies Satan may throw at us, we have the power to diminish them through God's strength.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,
which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)

Our salvation gives us the mind of Christ. And the sword of the Spirit is our only offensive weapon. By the mention of His name and word, the enemy is defeated.

Dear God, if we try to live without your armor for support, we will be numb and endure pain. It is only through faith, truth, and your Word that we can trust and stand in life today. Lord, help us never to forget or neglect our need for your protection and help. We thank you that it is made available to us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pauline Creeden
Yorktown, VA

Hurry and Worry

*As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee.
Jeremiah 17:16*

If you spend even five minutes in the car traveling down the highway, you will pass or be passed by several other cars. It seems most people are always in a rush, and so many are too busy to slow down and wait for God. By being in a hurry, it causes us to worry and to fret. When we do this, it then overwhelms us.

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (Philippians 4:6)

In order to be in tune and in accordance with our God, we need to be patient and wait on Him. When we are hurried, it gives us a false sense of being in control, and causes us to worry—worry that we will be late, or worry that we will be an inconvenience to someone else, or worse—worry that we will miss out on something more important.

Instead, we should wait patiently on God's will for our life. By waiting on Him, we can know and trust that the Heavenly Father has only the best for us, and that He will help us through any situation that will arise in our daily lives.

I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait,
and in his word do I hope. (Psalm 130:5)

Oh, Lord, you constantly ask us to wait for you. But in our hurry, we often leave you behind. I pray that we will remember that you are our companion in life, and in remembering you that we will slow down and choose to spend time with you. In all things, Lord, let us rest in your peace. Amen.

Pauline Creeden
Yorktown, VA

Chapter 2

Open Our Eyes to God

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption
that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:23-24

Making Straight Paths for Our God

Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Luke 3:2-6

If John the Baptist's message could be summed up in one word it would be—repent.

Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 3:2)

Throughout the gospels, this word repent and repentance describes the mission of John the Baptist—the first prophet of that time. His goal was that all would come to know the Lord. (Matthew 3:2, Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3)

All four gospel accounts refer to Isaiah 40:3-4—this verse represents the road a king would have made on his journey to a foreign land, often in search of something more or better. It is similar to John's journey, whose primary focus was on repentance and forgiveness of their sins of those with whom he came in contact with. (Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4-6, John 1:23).

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness,
prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert
a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooke
shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.”

(Isaiah 40:3-4)

Combining the two messages together, Isaiah 40:3-4, in some way, is proclaiming, “Repent.” But the connection between the two messages is not obvious at first. How does repentance equate to preparing the way for the Lord, of making a highway in the desert for His coming, and ensuring that the path is straight?

I am reminded of the story Jesus told of a forgiving father and his sinful son in Luke 15.

And [the son] arose, and came to his father.
But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him
and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck,
and kissed him. (Luke 15:20)

In other words, John the Baptist's job description tells us that God is extremely

interested in finding the shortest distance between two points—Him and us. Even though to us He may seem a great way off, but then, when He sees us turning back toward Him, nothing will keep Him away. We must get the obstacle out of the way, because the Father longs to come running to us.

There is only one obstacle that keeps God from running to us—a refusal to turn toward Him. Our Father gives us the freedom to choose His love or to deny it. Repentance— like love—cannot be forced.

Repentance is as simple as a change of mind and a change of heart. Allowing God to make a new you and to show a change in your life is the awesome gift He gives once we finally accept His love into our lives.

Our turning toward home is all the Father is waiting to see us do. It is not the finish line as some would believe. We must continue to develop that relationship as struggles will come. But when they do come, we must also ask God's forgiveness, so that He may create a clean heart in each of us, so that we can live freely in Him. By repenting, we are allowing God the ability to change our direction, and allowing Him to shape our futures.

Father, I am amazed that you loved us so much, and that you came to earth to seek, and to save us. The face you show as you run to us demonstrates the fullness of your love and compassion. Thank you, Father. Amen.

Connie Cook
Creston, British Columbia

First Love

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

Matthew 22:37-38

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Revelations 2:4-5

The human heart was created to worship. Those who consider themselves non-religious will be deceived by choosing not to worship God.

I see the truth of it through a teenager who cannot possibly survive a day without her cellphone or without the latest piece of technology. I see it in a hockey fan who knows every statistic for every player on his team, and who would only miss a game due to pain or death. I see it in the frenzied faces of a concert-goer, or the red-carpet-event attendees, or in the stockbrokers on Wall Street, as they come into personal contact with the object of their worship.

What defines the difference between right and proper enjoyment of God's great gifts and the worship of them? Two words—First Love. Jesus put His finger on the first and greatest commandment for us—love no other gods. It is about priorities. Boiled down, the first commandment of the ten which says:

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:3)

When we love God with all of our heart and all of our souls, it is then that our worship becomes His worship. Likewise, when we choose not to love God and turn our backs on Him, our worship is found in other things of this earth. Our hearts become cold and incapable of knowing His love as a result of turning our backs on Him.

In Revelation, Jesus wrote a love letter to the church in Ephesus. In a symbolic way, He reminded them that He held them tightly in His right hand and walked in their midst. I'm reminded of His promise in Hebrews 13:5, which says:

I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (Hebrews 13:5)

He then commended the Ephesian church for doing what pleased Him. However, He could not sign His name concluding His love letter without first letting the Ephesian Christians know what they were doing to break His heart. The Father did this, because the church *left* their First Love.

Doctrinally, they were as solid as could be. Behaviorally, they were right on the mark. They believed all the right things, and did them as well. The only thing missing was a heart filled with love for their First Love. Yet, the absence of that one thing involves the first and

greatest commandment, and nothing else can truly be right without it. All the other commandments hang upon the first.

I find it important to note the intentional word choice Jesus selects to use in writing His letter to the Ephesian church. His people had *left* their First Love.

When I turn away from my First Love, it is because my focus on Christ's love has been replaced by something else. My heart has longed for something other than the Father's love. When this happened, although it may not have been intentional, but as a result, my love for God was jeopardized. In order to make this right and to be in focus with Christ again I have to ask the Heavenly Father for forgiveness. By doing this, I am then able to live freely again.

Jesus' recommendation to those who have left their First Love is simple: repent.

How do we do this? What does "turning back" toward our First Love look like? 1 John 4:19 gives us a practical tip:

We love him, because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

It is easy for us to extend love toward someone else who loves us in return with unconditional, unwavering, and unbreakable love. When I find my eyes being drawn toward some other object of worship, and I sense that I am in danger of leaving my First Love, I remember the passion with which I am loved—we love, because He loves.

Father, it seems so easy for me to leave my First Love. It is so easy to pursue what can never satisfy and what does not love me back. Remind me of how you first loved me, so that I can remember and return to my First Love again. Amen.

Connie Cook
Creston, British Columbia

Spiritual Eye Surgery

*And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.
2 Kings 6:15-17*

Faith is not blind, as some would believe. It is a different kind of sight all together—the kind of eyesight that sees the truth behind the tangible realities of our world. Elisha’s servant didn’t need to muster up more faith by sheer willpower as the scripture tells us. He just needed to have his eyes opened to the truth.

When we learn to open our eyes as the servant did it shows us how to see God’s work in our lives. By seeing what God sees, it changes us and it makes us appreciate His love more. His ultimate goal for our lives is to conform us into the image of His Son—Jesus. God’s work is performed by enabling us to see more and more of His reality (2 Corinthians 3:18).

God desires for us to be like Him by taking on the perfect image of His Son—Jesus. When this happens we will then be able to see Him “as He is” (1 John 3:2). When we take on that image of Christ and our spiritual eyesight becomes clear again, it is then that God’s work of perfecting us in His likeness is a success.

I find it amazing as I read through the book of Revelation, that the account of events follow an interesting pattern. The action in Revelation flashes back and forth between a view from earth and a view from Heaven. On earth, terrible things are happening. But the scenes in Heaven are scenes only of worship. The pattern is puzzling in that the worship in Heaven takes place not in spite of what’s happening on earth, but because of it. The occupants of Heaven are not blind to the terror on earth, but they respond to it with worship. How is that possible? It is possible because the occupants of Heaven have perfect vision. They see the reality that God is good and loving. It is then that they acknowledge that He is truly in control of their lives.

If we can grasp the fact that God’s army always surrounds His people, what a difference that viewpoint will make. Nothing can reach us before it first runs through the gauntlet of the chariots of God’s protection. Only the circumstances God allows can get us through that gauntlet. God will only do what is good and loving. Yes, there will be pain in life. But having a relationship with God will help us get through the difficult moments of our lives.

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1-3)

I have lived in bondage and fear for most of my life. Like Elisha’s servant, I have come to see that my state of bondage is a result of believing lies rather than seeing the truth.

If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

and ye shall know the truth, and the truth
shall make you free. (John 8:31b-32)

By knowing God, we can live in truth. When Jesus promised us this, He laid out His prescription for our weak spiritual eyesight—"continue in my word."

God uses a concentrated beam, the light of His Word, to perform His spiritual eye surgery on us. If seeing more and more of Him is the answer to all of our needs, then we learn to see the truth of who He is through studying and through reading His Word on a daily basis.

*Father, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. (Psalm 119:18)
Let me see more of you through your Word. Amen.*

Connie Cook
Creston, British Columbia

Prayer Warriors and Prayer Wimps

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

Ephesians 6:10-11, 18

Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

Isaiah 59:15-17

I know a few prayer warriors who show through the way they pray that their hearts are in the right place. I hear them praying effortlessly, yet fervently, at Bible studies, or prayer meetings. When they tell me, "I'll be praying for you," I believe them, because that is the kind of people they are.

I, however, am emphatically not a prayer warrior. I am a self-proclaimed prayer wimp. For years, I have struggled to maintain any kind of a consistent prayer life, varying my methods in hopes that some new technique would work for me. By "work for me," I mean that prayer would not feel like work and that my prayer time could become a time of enjoyment, not a duty.

The kind of prayer I have the hardest time enjoying is an intercessory prayer. This is not the conversational type of prayer where you share the details of the day through conversational means, (although that type of prayer is of utmost importance, too, especially in building a consistent relationship with God); when Christ hung on the tree for our sins this was intercessory prayer. He went to the cross to die so that we could have life ever-lasting. He did battle for us while hanging on the cross.

From an Old Testament portion that helped inspire the Apostle Paul to write His famous "Armor of God" passage, I've learned why intercession is so difficult for me. Praying in this manner, has felt like a battle. The prophet Isaiah records a scene where we are given a glimpse of God, the Mighty Warrior, in His barracks. He's getting ready to go into battle for His people by putting on His armor—His breastplate of righteousness, His helmet of salvation, His zeal for His people, and His vengeance against their enemy. Sadly, He is going into battle alone because He can't find an intercessor. I believe that is why I couldn't do this kind of praying. I'm not that strong when it comes to fighting on other's behalf. I wouldn't want them to lose their battles because I have not been consistent. God never lets us do the battle alone as He has shown them through this scripture.

I was convicted after reading this, and it made me realize that prayer is important. I knew then, that I needed to be more consistent in my prayer life. I did not want to appall God

by my lack of care and concern for others allowing them to face their battles alone without lending them my support. Yes, God is a mighty warrior fighting against evil. Yes, He is fighting our battles for us. He is the all-relational God. He desires to go into battle for His people and with His people as they do battle for their fellow soldiers. In order to be an intercessor, I need to borrow God's armor. I need to use His strength, His protection, and His weapons. Hard work or not, I need to do it, and I need to be consistent.

When the battles rage against us and when our hope feels lost, it is important for us to consider prayer. With a consistent prayer life, our battles are not ours alone. Instead, our battles become God's battle too. Through prayer, we can see a new hope for our future by giving it to the ONE who fights our battles on our behalf.

Father, thank you that you are the Mighty Warrior and that you are fighting for us. Thank you for the privilege of joining you in battle. Help us to act in obedience. Help us to care enough to fight on our knees.

Connie Cook
Creston, British Columbia

Chapter 3

Relationships with God

There is none righteous, no, not one.

Romans 3:10

A Deeper Relationship with Jesus

The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.
Zephaniah 3:17

More than anything else, Jesus delights in having a deep and abiding relationship with us. He desires to walk with us on our journey of life, and become a part of our daily lives. Every area of our lives is of interest to Him, including daily routines that may seem mundane and insignificant. Some of us doubt that God is concerned with such trivial matters. Because of God's invisibility and His apparent silence, it is difficult for some people to develop a close relationship with Him. He understands our doubts and difficulties. Through prayer and through Bible study, He can help us overcome them.

It delights the Lord when we take our fears and burdens and place them in His hands for Him to keep. He has perfect knowledge of us, and He understands us better than our family, our friends, and even ourselves. He is aware of our transgressions and failures, yet His arms are open wide to embrace us and to forgive us. His love for us is unconditional.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love:
therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. (Jeremiah 31:3)

It delights the Lord when we seek His guidance prior to making decisions, rather than striking out on our own. So many times we miss the mark and end up on our knees as a last resort. As our relationship with Jesus grows, we become less self-reliant and more dependent on our Savior, who knows all things.

Although we cannot see Him visibly, He is there. It delights the Lord when we open up our hearts to Him, revealing our hopes and dreams and seeking His will for our lives. This precious time with the Lord yields rich and fertile soil for trust to grow. As trust grows, our relationship with Jesus grows. When we truly grasp His great love for us and the delight He has in us, we can develop a deeper relationship with Him. Jesus Christ is the most important relationship we will ever have in our lives.

Father, help us comprehend the depth of your love and the delight you have in us. Help us be mindful to pray first before making decisions. Help us develop a deeper relationship with Jesus. Help us never to forget that Jesus is the most valuable relationship in our lives. I love you, Father. Amen.

Susan Ferguson
Jackson, MS

His Hand of Providence

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.
Romans 8:28*

Sometimes life is hard, a death occurs, health issues arise, the job ends, or finances hit rock bottom. During such times, our minds are busy, trying to figure things out, questioning why, and seeking solutions. We wonder how God can untangle our lives and bring good out of bad circumstances. All the while, God's providence is at work, bringing about His purpose for our lives and His glory.

Our Heavenly Father is always at work, governing the world, steering the stars in their courses, causing the sun to shine and the rain to fall, and working all things according to His will. Like the sea, God's providence is constantly in motion; nothing can chain or restrain it. He rules everything, both great and small. He upholds Heaven and earth by His mighty hand, yet a lowly sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice.

God's providence can work all things for good to those who love Him and are called to His purpose. Our lives are not left to the whims of chance. Everything we go through is filtered through the loving hands of our Father. Even the small things of life are ordered by Him.

God's hand of providence stretched to Joseph, the favored son of Jacob. Joseph was thrown into a pit by his jealous brothers, sold into Egyptian slavery, falsely accused of rape, and even imprisoned. Throughout it all, God was with him. Joseph rose to prominence as the highest official under Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt. During a seven-year famine, Joseph was responsible for saving many lives, including his brothers. Joseph understood that what his brothers intended for harm, God intended for good. He reconciled with his family, demonstrating the true meaning of love, forgiveness, and faith in God.

God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day,
to save much people alive. (Genesis 50:20)

Joseph's life is a perfect example of God bringing good out of evil and unfavorable circumstances. God is greater than the evil of the world, and He will accomplish His purposes in spite of it.

We talk ourselves out of God's amazing providence by conceding that Joseph is a Biblical character and that God's dealings with us are different. We think the Biblical characters are more significant in God's eyes than we are. God loves us equally and will move Heaven and earth to work in the lives of those who love Him. The story of Joseph is one of the Bible's more popular passages, and serves as a reminder of God's providence for today.

Father, thank you for caring for us, and for taking an active role in our lives. Thank you for your awesome providence that shows good can come from bad circumstances and bring glory to Jesus. Amen.

Susan Ferguson
Jackson, MS

Relationships Take Center Stage

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

James 1:5

Nearly every facet of our lives touches a relationship in some way. God places in us a need to be with people and form relationships. The family is the closest relationship to our hearts, and dear friends are our most precious resources. The people we treasure the most are those who love us despite our faults and our failures. It is in them that we trust and feel safe. These rare jewels are the friends with whom we want to spend time and share life's experiences.

Relationships can either brighten our days or turn blue skies gray. They are the source of our greatest joy and our deepest pain. We struggle when we are at odds with people. Often times, we need God's wisdom to give us understanding and a new perspective, so we can deal with issues effectively. His wisdom is available to us in every situation we face. He gives us free will to think for ourselves; therefore, we need to ask God for His wisdom. He is delighted when we choose His wisdom over our own.

We suffer when relationships end. The finality of a loss can shatter dreams and break hearts into tiny pieces. The Lord has a tender spot for those who grieve and suffer loss; He stands close with a watchful eye.

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;
and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. (Psalm 34:18)

God's love and grace allows us to see people through the eyes of Jesus. Some people are not easy to love; we need His love flowing through us to them. We need His love to help us look past human flaws. We need His love to heal our hurts and overlook offences. All of our relationships need the light and love of Jesus. A close walk with Jesus brings love and grace into our hearts and shines light on our relationships.

Father, thank you for giving us your wisdom, which is more valuable than all the gold combined in the world. Help us see people through the loving eyes of Jesus. Help bring peace to difficult relationships, comfort to those who mourn, and healing to broken hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.

Susan Ferguson
Jackson, MS

Pursuing the Mind of Christ

*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
Romans 12:2*

I always take the scenic route on my way to Church, where pine trees line the boulevard and greenery fashions the roadside. As I admire the beauty, I catch a glimpse of children cheering at a ball park in a soccer tournament. My heart sinks. This is Sunday morning in the Bible Belt of Mississippi. It is then that I think of my dear mother taking me on her knee and telling me about Jesus. I come to a red light and stop. In silence, I bow my head and pray for the children.

The world is changing at a rapid pace, and there is growing concern for our Christian values. Like the force of gravity, the mindset of the world is trying to pull us down to its level. The saying “attitudes are contagious” holds true, and if we are not alert, we can adopt the wrong outlooks. The bright lights of the world can blind us, catching us off guard and steering our thoughts in the wrong direction.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the world’s influences. We want to preserve Christian values and virtues for them, but how? By praying and pursuing the mind of Christ, we can help maintain our Christian values. By thinking as Jesus thinks, we can reduce the world’s impact while shining light on our own personal sphere of influence.

When we draw close to God and read His Word, He begins to form in us the mind of Christ. God has the arduous task of retraining and renewing our minds from a lifetime of wrong thinking. As God’s Word takes root in our minds, we begin to think more like Jesus. As we think more like Him, we become more like Him.

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. (Proverbs 23:7)

God’s desire is to form the mind of Christ in all His children. Because He gives us free will to choose, we need to pursue the mind of Christ by drawing close and reading His Word. Sadly, some Christians fail to take this vital step, and as a result, they make minimal changes in their thinking.

With God’s help, we can make a difference in the world. Like little candles, we can dot the globe and scatter light to help counter the world’s darkness. We can share His timeless truths with others by taking little children onto our knees and telling them about Jesus. By embracing His words, and holding them close to our hearts, we can help preserve God’s truth and goodness in the world.

Father, we want to be instruments of your use in helping to maintain our Christian values. Let our lights shine brightly for Jesus, so we can scatter light on the world and share it with those who do not know you. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Susan Ferguson
Jackson, MS

Waiting on the Lord

*Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him.
Psalm 37:7*

Isn't it ironic how time passes so quickly, yet waiting for God to answer our prayers seems like an eternity? Most of us have something we are praying about and for which we are eagerly awaiting God's answer. We find our faith and patience put to the test when time passes and our requests remain unanswered. We can identify with the prophet Habakkuk when he grows weary in waiting for God to answer his prayer:

“O LORD, how long shall I cry,
and thou wilt not hear!” (Habakkuk 1:2)

God hears our every prayer and listens intently as only a loving Father does. He answers our petitions according to His sovereign will and timing. Though we may not understand all of His ways, we need to remember that He has our best interests in mind. We are His children, and He wants to bless us. He alone knows what is absolutely best for our lives and our future. When we accept these truths, we know that God's answer to our prayers is more than worth the wait.

When our prayers are delayed, we tend to fret and wonder why, and as a result we lose our peace of mind. Delays are only temporary and can change suddenly in our favor. Rather than boggle our minds, let us trust in the living God from whom all blessings flow. God is well able to meet our needs and will bring our prayers to pass.

All believers face times of waiting, so we might as well accept the wait and enjoy life's journey. When we surrender to God's timing, He can work on our behalf without hindrances. Our waiting is put to good use as God increases our endurance and brings us to a new level of strength and confidence in Him.

When we think we cannot wait another minute longer, God provides the strength we need to keep going. His grace and love flow freely and cannot be depleted. If you are at the brink of giving up, know that you have a Savior who cares for you and wants to help carry your burdens.

Casting all your care upon him;
for He careth for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

Jesus replaces our doubts and fears with hope and peace, and gives us strength to continue our journey. When we walk close to Him, we can enjoy our lives while we wait.

Father, thank you for giving us your grace and love that has no limit or end. Help provide a sense of hope for those who have grown weary in their wait. Help meet the needs of all who read this, and help them live joyfully as their prayers are answered in your time. In Jesus' name, amen.

Susan Ferguson
Jackson, MS

Chapter 4

God with Us

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God
is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

Abba, Father

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.
Galatians 4:4-7

It happened in an instant, yet my mind's eye replays it in slow motion. Pedals and legs, arms and handlebars—all blurring into one tires-over-head crash onto the sidewalk that I couldn't move fast enough to prevent.

"Daddy, it hurts!" he cried.

"I know, buddy. I know."

All I knew to offer in the way of comfort was to hold him and tell him I understood his hurt. I could not wave a magic wand to replace the skin that was now missing from mid-forearm to elbow. And telling a child he was fortunate not to have broken a bone would not make the pain less severe nor stop it any sooner.

"Daddy knows, buddy; he has the scars to prove it," I said, explaining the telltale signs of my youth.

What an amazing God we have. Like all good fathers, He gives us the freedom to live our own lives, make our own decisions, and deal with our own mistakes. We learn from these choices. Yet, when the pain comes, He is always there to comfort us.

During Advent we celebrate the fact that Jesus came to live among us—God with us. At Easter we celebrate His triumph over death. When He says, "I know. I understand your pain," He also has the scars to prove it. The Bible does not tell us whether a young Jesus ever skinned His knee or scraped His elbow, but we do know He suffered excruciating pain when he went to the cross out of his utmost concern for every child in His kingdom.

What a privilege we have, to know that when pain comes, we can be wrapped in God's embrace, and call Him Abba (Daddy). He won't prevent every pain, but He is always there to comfort us. What a wonderful, compassionate Father we have.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the freedom you give us to choose our own paths and to make our own decisions. While we don't always make the choices you prefer, we know that if we merely turn to you, we can count on your healing embrace, comfort, and compassion. How grateful we are to be your children, your heirs. In Jesus' name, we thank you. Amen.

Jeff Hand
Hiawatha, Iowa

The Last Supper

*And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it,
and gave to them, and said, "Take, eat: this is my body."*

Mark 14:22

Whenever anything “big” happens in my family, we gather to share food and drink. Whether a milestone birthday, an anniversary or a graduation, the family comes together and we celebrate. These gatherings include a minimum of cake, nuts, mints, and punch, perhaps sandwiches or salads, or often a full-fledged dinner. Even a somber occasion, such as a death, means food delivered to the grieving family and a funeral luncheon to celebrate the life lived.

The Bible records something “big” happening in Jesus’ life too. He has foretold the upcoming event several times before, but on the last night of his earthly life, He needs to share His news one final time. He could not have more sobering news—one of the twelve disciples will betray Him, all will fall away, and Jesus Himself will be put to death. To share this news one last time, Jesus gathers His disciples—His family—to share a meal.

But this is no ordinary meal.

With this meal, Jesus provides us with great news. He creates a new covenant. He gives His body for us. He becomes the sacrificial lamb for us. Our salvation is in this meal! Following the meal, Judas betrays Jesus. Then, Jesus is taken by soldiers to the cross, where He is hung to die for our sins. All a part of God’s plan—for us and for our salvation.

For this is my blood of the new testament,
which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28)

Jesus has given us great news to share with all. It is the greatest celebratory meal of all. The news of Christ dying means that we will have life everlasting. Who will you invite?

Lord Jesus, we thank you for our families and friends, for the many meals we share, and for the covenant you made with each of us through your Last Supper. Help us to use your words and ours to share your good news with others. Amen.

Jeff Hand
Hiawatha, Iowa

Sacrifice of the Forsaken

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
Matthew 27:45-46

On March 2, 2012 a series of tornadoes broke out across the mid-section of the United States. Much damage was done, and several lives were lost. Amongst all that destruction, at least two young lives were saved.

One of the tornadoes, with estimated winds of 175 mph, bore down on Henryville, Indiana, the home of Stephanie Decker and her two young children. As she realized her home would take a direct hit, she threw her body over her children to protect them. Debris, including a refrigerator and cinder blocks, fell on her, crushing her legs. Both had to be amputated.

Ms. Decker sacrificed her body for her children.

I cannot imagine what Ms. Decker went through. But I can imagine the thought process that says, "I need to protect my kids." I have two young boys myself, and I love them and my wife as much as any man can. There is little I would not do for them.

But I cannot conceive being battered, flogged, and crucified; would I be willing to face such things for those I love? How much can a man (or woman) truly be expected to bear for his family? Jesus faced all of this and more—for me and for you. For us, he felt the agony and shame of being separated from his Father in Heaven. For us, he died a horrendous death.

And His was no mere impulse or reaction to circumstances. All these horrible things were known to Jesus in advance. He faced many temptations to avoid it. He had every reason to say, "No, I don't deserve this. I'm not going through with it." However, if he had succumbed to these temptations and avoided this death, the darkness of that day would have been eternal for all of us. We would have been forever separated from God.

Jesus sacrificed His body for God's children—for you and for me.

Gracious God, please be with all of those who are suffering, those who are facing loss, and those who have made sacrifices on behalf of others. I can't imagine what they face. Nor can I imagine what Jesus faced on our behalf—the advance knowledge of His suffering, the cruel beatings, the horrific death, and worst of all, the separation from you, Father, alone in darkness. A simple thank you hardly seems enough. Help us each to live lives worthy of the sacrifice Jesus made. In His name we pray, amen.

Note: Even while facing her own recovery, Stephanie Decker and her family have established a foundation to help other victims of the March 2, 2012 tornadoes. For more information, refer to the Community Foundation of Louisville. May God bless all of their work in these horrific circumstances.

Jeff Hand
Hiawatha, Iowa

He Is Not Here; He Is Risen!

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

Matthew 28:5-7

Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed.

It is tempting to end this devotion right there. After all, the resurrection of Jesus is the essential point of this scripture; indeed, it is the central point of Christianity. But there are a couple of additional things the gospel writer shared that are worth mentioning.

First, not only has Christ risen, but it is “just as He said.”(Matthew 28:6) In many ways leading up to His death, Jesus had promised His return, that He would conquer death for us all. And He kept that promise. If He could keep that promise, what promise would He not keep?

Second, the angel tells the women to “go quickly” and “tell his disciples.”(Matthew 28:7) All deserve to hear this message. We must go quickly. Why? Because it is our human nature that these good feelings will fade, we’ll become busy with day to day life, and before long we’ll lose our excitement for this magnificent event.

With whom do you need to share the good news? Go quickly! Tell it to all you see. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Lord Jesus, thank you for conquering death on our behalf. Lead us to those who need to hear your good news. Encourage us that we may go quickly and boldly to them. And let us not forget the excitement of that first Easter morning, when they angel tells us that you are risen, just as you said. Amen.

Jeff Hand
Hiawatha, Iowa

Chapter 5

Faith in God

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that,
while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

Worshipping Scarecrows

They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.

Jeremiah 10:5

A scarecrow is like a surrogate farmer, erected in a field to guard the crop when the farmer is away. Deceptively similar in appearance to its flesh and bone counterpart, it is an adequate deterrent for dim-witted pests. But in truth, it is an impotent protector. Its limbs hang lifeless, and its mouth stays silent. Dependent on a pole to keep it erect, its work amounts to idle passivity. It is an illusion of substance. As such, it was like the idols of the nation of Israel.

But the rebuke carries across the generations into my own day. It is a suitable depiction of the idols in my own life, the things I trust in place of God. They are surrogates that may, for a time, hold pests at bay, such as placing my confidence in a steady paycheck because it offers me a feeling of security. I trust in that weekly deposit to meet my needs for food, clothing, and shelter. But my misplaced confidence is shaken by an unexpected expense, a down turn in the economy, or a round of layoffs at my company. What I thought to be of substance turns out to be full of hay.

Instead of a surrogate, I'm invited to trust the true farmer, whose work is not idle passivity, but mighty protection. He will feed me like the birds and clothe me like the flowers. He will cultivate my life toward fruitfulness.

Lord, reveal the idols in my heart and help me to renounce them. Help me to trust you as the true farmer, cultivating my soul. Amen.

Phil Huber
Baldwinsville, NY

Roots

*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.
Colossians 2:6-7*

When spring arrives in Upstate New York, and the blanket of snow finally recedes, it reveals a landscape of bare trees and matted vegetation. The harsh effects of a punishing winter are evident. But as the weather warms and the days lengthen, the plants come back to life. Brown turns to green, bare branches are once again clothed, and new growth bursts forth. It would be a mistake to predict the potential for recovery from the wilted remains. Instead, life springs from a root system, hidden from sight, but undeterred by the long cold.

In Christ, the roots of my faith reach into the soil of my Savior. A strong root system is one in which the tendrils run deep, where I continue to live in Him. I root my life in a growing relationship with the Savior. Meditating on the Word, communing with God in prayer, using my gifts to serve the body of Christ, fellowshiping with other believers, and numerous other spiritual disciplines all serve to strengthen my roots. Then, even when the seasonal circumstances of life look barren, there will be life beneath the surface. My faith will carry me through the long winter into the spring.

Lord, help me develop roots that run deep in you. Amen.

Phil Huber
Baldwinsville, NY

Chapter 6

Love of God

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:9-10

The Secret of Living

*I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound:
everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and
to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all
things through Christ which strengtheneth me.
Philippians 4:12-13*

Prosperity can often leave us feeling secluded from the world. It can leave us empty and alone. So, how is it that Paul felt so contented with God? This was a man who had been chained and left for dead. How did He claim to know the secret of being contented?

What gave this ordinary man the strength that could move mountains and the faith to heal from oppression?

Simply said, it was his faith in God.

Like Paul, our circumstances can get the better of us and leave us feeling trapped. Unlike Paul though, he didn't allow those things to bind him down. Instead, he chose to allow God to remain at his side—no matter what he faced—he allowed God to be a part of his life.

By him doing this, he was able to pull through during those difficult moments of being jailed and persecuted because of what he believed. If we simply have that kind of faith then we too will be able to get through any difficult moments of life—just because we put our trust in God alone.

Faith was Paul's secret. That secret is what keeps us from crumbling to the ground. It's what holds us together like glue and paper. Reaching out our hands to the Father isn't always easy to do. Often because we lack the faith to believe He will pull us back in. But, He always does. Like those in a boat rocked by a storm, faith is the lifesaver that will help us stay safe. But if we do not have faith, and if we don't cling to the lifesaver, we will drown.

The secret to faith in God is to believe that He will do all He says He will do. Believing that He will rescue you no matter how bad things are. But if we hold onto our faith when trials happen, it is then that God will allow us to become strong in Him.

I have seen this in my own life in regards to my health. I know first-hand what it means to wait on Him and to put my absolute trust in His will for my life. Several years ago, I had to have heart surgery for the second time in my life. I was terrified by the thought that I may never pull through it. I remember waiting for answers to come from my doctor's. It was hard to wait and hard to lean closely to God's wisdom, yet when I did, He came through for me. I saw His hand work miracles in my life when I pulled through the surgery just fine. Sure, I was skeptical and scared, but I knew that my faith was the only thing that would pull me through, and it did.

I learned a valuable lesson that day when I came through just fine. I learned that all I had to do was to trust in the Father and have faith that He would work it out for my good. The key was to let Him work through me. Once I understood that and once I allowed the Father to have the reigns of my life, everything else worked out, and I survived. You can too.

The secret to living a happy, healthy, and having a productive life, can only come from trusting in the Heavenly Father.

Father, help me to believe in you more. Strengthen this feeble heart to fear and trust you. Let me see that you are who you say you are. I love you, Father. Amen.

Christine M. Miller-Ramey
Hilliard, Florida

The Heart-Changer

*Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.
Hebrews 3:7-9*

So many times, I see people who wander far from God's truth. Haven't you seen them? Those who choose to deny His name.

This verse helps me to understand that although we wonder and often choose to deny His name, it is in Him that we are guarded for life. God followed Moses in the wilderness for forty years and walked him across the Jordan lands. God had protected him from arm. I know that sometimes when we don't hear from God at times we can feel like Moses and we can get angry with God for not answering our prayers, nor answering our pleas. Yet, it also reminds me that no matter how far I run, no matter where I try to hide, when I'm faced with trouble, that God is always there watching out for me.

God showed Moses that He would never be far from him even during difficult times of our lives. Moses was quick to learn that God had his back even during those times of uncertainty. Even now as you read this, your heart may be broken from running from God. But know, that He longs to bring you back home and to have you in His arms again.

When Moses finally listened and realized that God had his back, even from birth, he walked with God through Jordan and together they crossed to the other side. Moses's job was to get the people out from where they were. He did this by crossing Jordan. He for the first time knew that in that moment that God had walked with Him for forty years and never let him go.

Life may seem uncertain, and it may seem as though it doesn't matter to be alive. But trust me, it does to God. Every second of your life matters to the One that gave you life. Your heart as well as your life can be changed in a second by giving it over to God and allowing Him the opportunity to guide you into the future. Will you allow Him this opportunity?

Being alive today only means that God has given you a second chance to turn your life around. By Christ—God's son—living and dying—meant that you have the opportunity to live an everlasting life with Him. It only takes a change of heart if you allow God to reside in your life. One minute of your time is all it takes to change your life forever.

Father, I'm grateful for your Son, who gave His life for an old sinner like me. I am thankful that we live because you gave. I love you, Father. Amen.

Christine M. Miller-Ramey
Hilliard, Florida

Destined As Conquerors

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.
Romans 8:28-29*

It is hard to comprehend sometimes that our lives were made to have a purpose and a plan predestined by God. I cannot fathom the thought that He knew me before I was ever born. Can you?

When we think about how big God is and we try to imagine who He is, it's really hard to do, as there is no description of Him recorded in the Bible. All that we know about God is that He is an all knowing God—simply put, He knows everything about us before we do. In other words, He knows when we are going to have pain. He knows when we are going to fail. He knows when we will laugh and when we will smile again. He knows all of this before we even know it will happen.

I love knowing that God knows every tear I will cry and every pain I will ever have. He knows my joys and He knows my sorrow. He knows every strand of hair on my head, and I am honored to know that my heart has become His home. I know that I am not always grateful for what I have when I should be, but I'm glad to know that He loves me anyway. He looks beyond my failures, and He sees the possibilities of what I can be.

See, my God is a forgiving God. He loves us despite the things that we do. It is amazing to know this because when I think about the evil people that are in this world, I don't think I would be as forgiving as He would. Could you?

So today, I ask you to step back and look into your heart. See what things you need to change. Think about how much God sacrificed for us. Could you give your only child away? Could you watch him be beaten and mocked? Could you see the nails driven into His hands or into His feet? I couldn't.

I know that I don't deserve His awesome love or the greatness that He gives to me. Yet, He continually does love me and He does give it to me— day-in and day-out. He does it because He loves me, and He will do it for you as well. Just give your heart to Jesus Christ, let go of the things that keep you separated from Him. Open your heart and your mind to the truth that will set you free from the bondage you are in. By continuing to walk in God's goodness, you'll see that your life is not the same any longer. Things will become different, and a new you will begin to flourish from the moment you allow Him into your heart.

God's predestined plan for you? Allowing God the privilege of knowing you on a day-to-day basis and giving Him your heart is His ultimate plan for your life. What will you choose?

Father, I know I don't deserve your love. I don't deserve anything, and yet, you still gave so much for me. I'm thankful for what I have and who I am because of you. I love you, Father. Amen.

Christine M. Miller-Ramey
Hilliard, Florida

No God?

*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.
Psalm 14:1*

The world has become a corrupt place, and people have forgotten who God is. They have said there is no God, and they have turned their backs on Him. I often wonder why they do this, and think that maybe it is because they have not experienced His warm arms wrapped gently around them, comforting them during difficult times. Maybe if they had experienced it even once, they would not be choosing to live their lives apart from Him.

What a shame it is that there are so many people living this way in our world. I was blessed to have found Him at a younger age, and to have experienced His love in such a fabulous way that I've never once looked back again. I have felt his presence walking beside me even in the depths of despair. I have felt God's hands holding me, and I have heard His voice speaking to me. Having experienced these things, I cannot imagine the thought of never knowing who God is.

God sacrificed so much for us. He did it because that is how much He loves us. Yet, so many choose to walk in sin, instead of living in God's love. Regardless of how we feel, He gave His only Son, Jesus, to die on a cross for you and for me. Giving something, so precious, as a child goes far beyond anything I could ever do on my own. Watching Jesus dying on the cross, wondering why His father had abandoned Him couldn't have been easy for God to do. This was His only child. To me, this shows God's love toward us. Not something to be taken for granted, but something that you should be proud of. After all, Jesus died for you too.

If you've been running from God, or have turned your back on Him, there is good news. God still longs to know you and to have you as His child. The door is always opened—you just have to take it.

Father, thank you for reminding me of who you are, and how great your love is because I often fail at doing so. I am thankful to have you in my life and to know that you are a part of me. Never let me forget the sacrifice you made by giving your only Son to die for my sin. I love you, Father. Amen.

Christine M. Miller-Ramey
Hilliard, Florida

Stand Courageous in the Lord

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Joshua 1:7-9

Joshua was in charge of leading the people into the Promised Land. Those living there in that land hated God. Joshua had a fight on his hands. It was hard and tiresome, but something that he was commanded to do. Even so, in those times of difficulties, God gave Joshua peace and comfort in knowing that He would always be there with him wherever Joshua went.

I love knowing that my Father will always be there for me, no matter what happens in life, don't you? I love knowing that God will make me strong and able to fight against anything that I will encounter in life. I am sure that knowing this about God was comforting and reassuring to Joshua during those moments when he had to fight the enemy.

God also instructed Joshua to meditate on the Book of Law, day and night. Now, if you are like me, you cannot imagine why on earth God would ask Joshua to meditate on the law during a time of war? I believe, as I have experienced in my own life that when you meditate on the words of God (the Bible), you will find His strength and protection from those things that can harm you.

He commands us to cling to His words, because He knows that there are things that will tear us away from Him. His words will keep us from a world of evil things and will keep our minds focused on Him. If we choose, as we turn to the left or turn to the right, to listen in on the things of this world that we should not be hearing, then we are choosing not to set our hearts on higher things. Our minds, as a result, will wander from the truth and because of it, will not be focused on the things that we know in our hearts are right to do. That is why God commands us to meditate on His word.

Today, if you will listen closely to the words of Christ, and let them linger in your heart, I know you will see a change in your life. So if you are hurting, or you have strayed away from His words, then turn back to them, and meditate on them day and night. Let your heart listen, and let your mind hear and then cling to them throughout your day. They will in turn bring you peace and comfort for your difficult moments in life.

Father, thank you for the Bible, a place to cling onto the truth of who you are. You're words of life written within breathe hope into my heart and soul. I love listening closely to your words of wisdom for my life. I love you, Father. Amen.

Christine M. Miller-Ramey
Hilliard, Florida

The Beginning of Wisdom

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge:
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Proverbs 1:7

Hearing the voice of God and listening to His instructions can often be difficult to do. But why is it so hard? Why do we avoid listening to what He tells us? I don't know about you, but for me, it is my sinful nature that allows me to drift away from what He teaches. When I turn from His Word and guidance, it is then that I become unavailable to Him.

Leaning away from His teaching is not how God desires us to live our lives. He tells us in the scripture that the beginning of wisdom is in fearing Him. When we learn to do that, we can help others see Him clearly.

The beginning of understanding who God is comes through having Him present in our lives. Reading His word daily, and having a consistent prayer life will help us to know God better. Yet, I see so many that don't. They choose not to live in the presence of God. How can we walk through life and not know God? I can't understand never knowing the joy, and or His blessings I have by being His child.

God loved us so much that He gave us the world to live in, and He gave us the choice as to how we live in it. The Father's love knows no bounds. It reaches into the depths of our sinful hearts. He touches our lives in ways we cannot comprehend. That is just how much He does love us.

Why make the choice to have it any other way? Reach out your hand to Him, and let Him give you the direction you need in your next steps of life. He has always wanted to be a part of your life; it is up to you to allow Him to enter so that you may have a grounded relationship with Him. Fearing God is really the beginning of wisdom, and the only way to have a deeper relationship with Him.

Father, I am glad you gave me the choice to know you and to love you. I am thankful that you gave your only Son to die on the cross for me. Being called your child is an honor. I love you, Father, Amen.

Christine M. Miller-Ramey
Hilliard, Florida

Because He Loves Me

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).

Ephesians 2:1-5

The grave is not a welcoming place; in fact, it is a place that welcomes the cold and the still bodies of our former lives. There is nothing we can do within our own power to resurrect a dead soul from a grave. When we are living in sin, we are dead to Christ. This is sad, but so true. Our sins prevent us from living with Christ and being free from our immorality. So, how do we resist this place? How do we rest in a better place? We have to acknowledge first who God is, and what He can do for us. When we do, we will begin to live a new and better life—a life full of hope rather than living in sadness, and or fear.

Living life with Christ gives us a sense of comfort from the wrongs that this world creates. It is the only life I want to live. It is not always easy, but a life lived with Jesus gives us strength to walk through the hardships that may come. God's peace and love surrounds us wherever we may be, through our obedience and when we surrender our lives to Him, His love will fill our cups daily. Having God's love gives us true joy that only He can give.

When we give our sins over to the Lord, and allow Him to walk beside us daily, something wonderful begins to happen. We soon discover that the old life we once lived is not worth living any longer. We find God's peace comes through surrender, and that is such a wonderful place to be. However, those who stay where they are, walking in sin and unchanged by God's grace, choose a cold place to be.

I pray that you will find God's peace. I hope that you will walk with God on a daily basis. When you do, you will discover His wonderful mercy and His abundant grace, and true joy that comes through knowing Him.

Father, I am so blessed that you have allowed me the opportunity to live with you. I am glad to know that I do not have to know that cold and dark place, and instead, can live in the warmth and happiness that comes from you. Thank you Father, I love you. Amen.

Christine M. Miller-Ramey
Hilliard, Florida

In Our Darkness

*But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.
Psalm 31:14-16*

God is a God of goodness and sovereignty for the troubled heart. He knows our every need before we do. I love that about God, don't you? After all, isn't that why we put our faith and our trust in Him in the first place?

So many times, I turn to God when life feels at its worst, and things are too hard to handle. What do you do when this time come in your life? Do you trust in Him enough? Sadly, I often fail at this.

I have not trusted God as often as I should. It is hard to fathom the thought that God is Lord over everything we do and touch. Sometimes I feel as though He is so far from me that I cannot even cry out to Him, and say, "God here I am, use me!" Why is it so difficult for me to trust that He will and can provide everything for me?

I believe that it is partly due to my lack of faith. I have indeed trusted Him as my Savior, but I sometimes think that even those who know Him often get sidetracked in life when disappointments arise. Sometimes, we forget that God is truly there for us. It is then that we begin to trust in ourselves to meet our own needs, instead of looking to God to meet our needs. When that happens, we stumble. We stop depending on the simple fact that God will do all He says He will do.

We also need to come to the understanding that all will work for the good of those who love the Lord, and that not all things are lost in the darkness. When we simply trust God's plan for our lives, we will find our lives will go more smoothly, and we will be more content with the circumstances around us.

I wish that everyone could see the wrong paths I have traveled in my life, and could learn from my failures. I work hard every day to trust Him to meet my needs, and I see the evidence of His power at work in my life through the miracles He performs on a daily basis.

God wants to be a part of your life. He wants to walk every step of your journey with you as He has done for me in my life. The only obstacle may be that it takes two of you to do that. Don't walk in darkness anymore, allowing your troubled times to become the hindrance to living a life full of joy with Him. Choose today to walk with Him and live in the light of His wonderful love.

Father, thank you for reminding me of how precious life is, and that you are always in control of my life. I am blessed beyond measure to have a Heavenly Father who loves me! I love you, Father. Amen.

Christine M. Miller-Ramey
Hilliard, Florida

Curveballs

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

Life hits us with some hard curveballs at times. So much so, that we feel as though we will not make it back up. Is this you? Maybe you have felt that way, and find yourself in a place where you feel as though you just cannot go on anymore.

It is interesting that in this same moment when we are kicked to the curb, we often find the strength we need to pull ourselves up and stand again when we trust in God to meet our needs. It is sometimes not until we have experienced losing someone, gone bankrupt, thrown into jail, or frankly, until we have simply lost everything that we see the need to give our burdens to God. Here is a thought to ponder: if we gave God everything to begin with, wouldn't that make life easier?

Why is it that we do things so backwards in life? Why can we not see that the one thing we need is Christ? In the Gospel of John, we find the story of a Samaritan woman who was just like we are. She didn't have anything. Her life was full of filth and worry. It was not until she met Jesus at the well that she found the water she was looking for that would quench her thirst.

The Samaritan woman could not understand why Jesus, a Jew, would ask her to give Him water. I think the Samaritan woman must have been a little dumbfounded and wondered, what is going on? She was hit with a big curveball, because not only did Jews and Samaritans hate one another, but men never talked to women in public.

Jesus, as we know, was an amazing storyteller. He could communicate well with every crowd wherever He went. It did not matter where He was or what He was doing—all attention was on Him as He shared His messages of hope and love. He explained to the Samaritan woman:

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:
But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him
shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him
shall be in him a well of water springing up
into everlasting life. John 4:13-14

The life that Jesus can give is like living water to our thirsty souls. All we have to do is ask for it and accept His great love. Sure, there are many curveballs in life, and we will eventually have to learn to dodge them when they come, isn't it reassuring to know that God is the one catching the ball? He will pick up all of the broken pieces of our lives, and mend our hearts perfectly, if we let Him. You can know Him personally as well by giving your broken heart over to Him. If God cares for the sparrow, and cares for every living thing on earth, then certainly He cares for our every need. He can carry your burdens, but only if you lay them before His throne. Are you ready to give your burdens to Him?

Father, teach me to leave my burdens at your throne. Help me to realize that you are always in control of my life. I love you, Father. Amen.

Christine M. Miller-Ramey
Hilliard, Florida

Chapter 7

The Power of God

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Romans 10:12-13

The Will of God

*Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
Matthew 7:21*

Even though, as believers, we try to do what is good, it is much more important for us to be in and do God's will daily. God's will for each life is different; thus, it is important that we know His specific will for our lives and carry it out.

Sometimes in our busy lives we tend to forget that God is in control of us. Therefore, our faith is then impaired and we lack the strength to pull through difficult times. It is then that we find ourselves in the struggle to get things back in order, meanwhile God is patiently waiting to lead and direct us. While there are some things we may do often, such as attend services regularly, pay our tithes, or sing in the choir, there is much more we can be doing within the Body of Christ. Being a member of the Body of Christ can be compared to working every day within a company, while there are daily expectations for you to fulfill, the reward goes only to those who show true diligence by going the extra mile, doing the Father's will.

As believers, we can choose to live our lives wearing the name-tag of a Christian, or walk out the example of a Believer who is about his Father's business and doing His will. As Believers, how many weeks out of the year do we include feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, helping the homeless find a place to live, or assist with a mission project as a part of our list of things we do? Today, many Christians are following their own self-will (sharing half of a cake for the after-service Sunday gathering when they have the means to give an entire cake), thinking they are in right standing with God, hoping they will make it into Heaven. Jesus clearly stated in this verse that those who are doing the will of my Father will enter into Heaven. He never compromised on that issue, He said:

It is those that are doing the will of the Father
who are given eternal life. (1 John 2:17)

Forsaking your own self-will and doing the will of God is not an option, nor something to take lightly, it is a requirement for every believer. We must know the will of God for our lives and manage it daily as we carry it out. Let us remain mindful in keeping that list of things we need to do daily, checked off, so that the Father, will be pleased with us.

Precious Father, thank you for your blessing of another day in which you have granted me to be your child. I appreciate your loving kindness and tender mercies. You have been faithful to me, and now you have allowed me joy and peace. Please give my heart the desires you would like for me to do for you that will make you happy, and bless me with the ability to see the real need of others of whom you want me to reach. Help me not only to share your presence, but also to reflect your love in such a mighty way that those around me will feel that they have been touched by you. In the loving name of Jesus I pray, amen.

L. Evette Pratt
Nassau, Bahamas

Unbelief Kills Productivity

*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.
Hebrews 3:12-13*

Looking back in the past we've all had expectations that we did not see happen, that we are still holding onto. There are also those times in life in general when we plan for something to happen, but it does not come out the way we anticipate. In such times, we tend to try again, often declaring that it will be better next time, taking on the positive attitude of not giving up.

As we relate this to the life of a Believer, who has earnestly prayed there are some prayers that may not have been answered right away. However, it is in such times that we are to increase our attitude of positivity through faith, which enhances our ability even greater to believe that the much needed answer will come. As we look at Daniel, who did not receive an answer right away to one of his prayers, we see that even after twenty-one days he continued in steadfast prayer for the answer which was initially already sent forth and on the way to him the moment he prayed.

And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God;
Yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. (Daniel 9:20-24)

Don't focus on how long you have been waiting for an answer from God, rather focus on God's will for your life knowing that God is perfecting you for what you have prayed for, so that when the answers arrive, you will be in the position to receive His will for you. In God's grace, we are encouraged through the difficult waiting periods to reassure each other to remain alert to the devil's devices, so that the sin of unbelief does not cause us to become hard-nosed toward our God.

Just as we have specialized staff members working within companies to increase and upgrade technologies, so must Believers in the Kingdom of God become specialized in alerting each other of the enemy's devices and schemes to destroy our lives. By putting on new habits and creating a new kind of lifestyle as Ephesians 4:22-24 tells us:

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man,
which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in
righteousness and true holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Then, we may increase productivity in the Kingdom for God's will to reign and rule in our lives. Unbelief not only diverts our answers, but it also distracts us away from God. And when unbelief is at work, there isn't room for anything else. The question was asked—

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3)

In order for us to obtain that which we have prayed for from God, we must have a continual heart of agreeing with God that His will be done in our lives.

Therefore, as we enter a new life with God, let us not only watch our steps as we strive to upgrade our personal belief systems, but also learn to commit to God's truth and teachings. After all, within the Kingdom of God, unbelief kills productivity.

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning
of our confidence steadfast unto the end; While it is said,
Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,
as in the provocation. (Hebrews 3:14-15)

Dear Father, we thank you for your loving kindness and understanding heart toward us. As we have often encompassed thoughts of unbelief, you have not turned away but instead continued to be patient with us. We are about to take the journey, and thus we pray for bold strength to not only abolish unbelief in our personal lives, but also the wisdom to address unbelief in the lives of our fellowman. We ask that your will may be perfected in each of our lives for your glory as it is in Heaven, in Jesus' name, amen.

L. Evette Pratt
Nassau, Bahamas

Love Through Provision; Expect It!

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.
Proverbs 3:5-6

We are fortunate to be provided with so much for us to enjoy and to make use of every day. God created us not to just live under His authority, of which we have protection, mercy, grace, and favor, but also to have a close relationship with Him. We are to bring pleasure to Him through both worship and by the way we respond to others. In Isaiah 45:18, we are reminded that everything God made was created for a purpose. God has never made a mistake with anything he designed, nor has He left it sitting in a corner hoping to one day find something to do with it. God has never been nor never will He be a God of chance; He is a God of plan, design, and has a distinct purpose for each of us in our daily lives.

God's love, grace, favor, mercy, forgiveness, and abundance all show us just how much He cares for us. His Word tells of His provision for everything we will ever need, and it is through our expectation in Him that His Word becomes fulfilled in our lives and we experience His love of provision. Through our Faith, and through our Hope, we can soon begin to see God's promised blessings in our lives.

As God gave the gift of life to man, He gave a part of Himself, and for this reason we are also expected to represent God as demonstrators of His love, authority, and power on the earth. As we live our daily lives, the Lord wants to remind us that He will always provide us with unconditional love. His amazing grace and faithfulness will surround us as we learn to walk in His love. We must remember that the love of God is the greatest gift we can share with others.

Do not detour with a heart of unbelief
for it always causes problems. (Hebrews 3:12)

Have faith in Me. Have My faith. Open up your heart,
and I will fill it with My faith. I AM faith. I give Myself to you.
Is anything too wonderful or impossible for Me? No!
I watch over My word to perform it. (Jeremiah 1:12)

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save;
neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. (Isaiah 59:1)

For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens;
God himself that formed the earth and made it;
he hath established it, he created it not in vain,
he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD;
and there is none else. (Isaiah 45:18)

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth:
it shall not return unto me void.

but it shall accomplish that which I please,
and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)

Dear Lord, we know, and recognize, as well as understand that you are God, and that

you are faithful. You keep covenant and steadfast love and mercy with those who love you and keep your commandments. We thank you that we can daily expect great things from you, exceedingly above and beyond what we can imagine according to your Word. We thank you for your beautiful gift of love given to us to share with others. May we always be reminded of the greatest love ever given in Jesus' name, amen.

L. Evette Pratt
Nassau, Bahamas

When We Commit to Delighting in the Lord

Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

Psalms 37:3-5

We have been given a new day to give praise to our God for the great and mighty work He is doing in our lives. Setting yourself in the frame of mind to magnify God, instead of thinking on present conditions is a matter of choice. It is a choice that will be challenged by the reality of what is happening in the natural but it is entirely attainable for as long as you put considerate effort into it.

Magnifying God is more rewarding than any other sort of mental exercise you may try, as it sets our hearts in motion to receive that which God has commissioned and purposed for our lives. It takes our minds off of the negative things happening within us, and it strengthens us spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. Often when we hear good news or receive a compliment, our faces brighten because our hearts have reflected the love that God has shown within each of us. When God becomes the center of attention in our hearts, it is then that His love will shine through us.

Magnifying God invites His thoughts and His presence into whatever situation we may be facing. Having God present in our lives gives us the opportunity to grow as we deepen our relationship with Him, when we allow Him the privilege of taking a part in our lives it is then that we can see His hand working within us. At times, the conditions of life hit us so hard that it may seem as if nothing is happening. However, it is in the midst of these times that we get a glimpse of what is going on behind the scenes, and we can see our angels working for us. Joy fills our heart when we can acknowledge that He is indeed Lord over our lives.

Having God in our presence and making Him a part of our daily life is what helps us move beyond those difficult moments of life. Giving our lives over to Him, allows the focus not to be put on us, but rather skillfully placed on Him.

Dear Lord, I thank you for the mind of Christ, and for the wisdom to invest my time in magnifying you above my problems. Help me to remember that it is through our hearts coming together that I will have a greater sense of peace, assurance, and self-confidence, so that I may watch your supernatural grace affect my reality. Thank you for your guidance and blessings, now and forever more, as I seek you, magnify you, hear from you, and spend time with you. In Jesus' precious name I pray, amen.

L. Evette Pratt
Nassau, Bahamas

The Blessings of April's Spring

*Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly,
and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair:
and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.
John 12:3*

In spring, it's a season to rise above the old and leap into a fresh newness of life in Christ. This is a great illustration for how God is constant in loving us. During this time, we not only have the opportunity to enjoy the birthing of new ideas, dreams, or plans, but we also have the wonderful opportunity to be a part of and enjoy the season of our Lord's resurrection. As we focus on the ultimate sacrifice Jesus made for us, we can celebrate in hope that just as Christ was raised from the dead; we will also receive great deliverance from our darkest moments.

God was very strategic in giving us this season, a time of Easter, a time where we can rest and reflect on the journey and life of Jesus. His mission on earth was to show us how to live as His brothers and sisters, and achieve the best results concerning everything we face.

We remember one of Jesus' greatest miracles concerning His beloved friend Lazarus (John 12:2). Even though Lazarus had been dead for four days, which shows a delay to the prayers of his loved ones, God restored him to life and this proved that the answer to their prayers were not denied. God restored new life in Lazarus so the world could witness His power. This loving bond of two very dear friends, who shared life and the miracle of resurrection that God performed together, signifies that God will most certainly help you too, even in a situation that seems to have death all over it. He will remove you from the position you were in, and cause you to spring forth with a fresh new life. As the name Lazarus signifies, "God will help."

Just as Jesus gave all of us the greatest gift by dying to bring forth new life, we must also die to a lot of conditions, mindsets, habits, and personality hang-ups to allow the 'new' that He wants to do in our lives to spring forth into our new lives. This time of Spring, gives us the opportunity to honor the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus, who has done more for us than we can ever imagine. Even in this season of honor and appreciation, we must build our trust in God, who has shown us in both Lazarus and Jesus that He is faithful even in the end. Be assured that God will never stop working on your behalf until you are completely delivered.

Dear Loving Father, we thank you for this wonderful time of year where we can reflect on the beautiful sacrifice of Jesus' life, while here on earth. As He is the one who lived to die for us all. Father, you have given us the greatest blessing—life. And even in our darkest moments, you renew our lives with help and hope. Father, please awaken our hearts and minds to receive all that you have planned for us to have in the coming days ahead. In Jesus' name, amen.

L. Evette Pratt
Nassau, Bahamas

Chapter 8

Paths of God

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:1-2

Plans with a Purpose

*For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.
Jeremiah 29:10-12*

Has the Lord placed dreams in your heart? Are there desires you have that you cannot imagine coming true? Are you convinced that you know your purpose in life, but don't know how you will achieve it based on the circumstances and obstacles immediately before you?

One of the things I love most about the Lord is that He certainly knows how to keep life interesting. Growing up, my mother always told us when referring to God, "We are on a need-to-know basis."

The phrase "need-to-know," when used by government and other organizations (particularly those related to the military or espionage), describes the restriction of data that is considered very sensitive.

One of the most difficult things in life can be the necessity of learning to be content exactly where we are; believing we have all the information we need-to-know at that moment to serve our current purpose in life. Just as the Lord told the people of Israel in the above passage, He may share with you what will happen during the next phase of your life (plans to prosper and not harm you), but He may not share with you the exact details.

Have you ever jogged up a steep hill? I have quite a bit of experience with this because the road leading to my home is steep, and if I go jogging, there is no way I am getting back home without treading uphill. One of the first things I learned when I began running was to never look up when climbing a hill.

Looking up to the top of a hill or mountain is distracting and can trick you into focusing on the enormity of the situation. You will not focus on the victory or success that awaits you at the top, but will focus on the immediate challenge. For most of us, that would cause us to stop running, and begin to walk. It is more of a mental challenge than physical.

What I learned early on while training for a marathon was, if you look down, just a foot or so in front of you, the road will appear flat. The entire time you are running up hill, your body won't even realize it. You can just keep going and going, and it will feel like the road is flat (if you're in shape, of course).

The road I ran in the illustration up above is similar to our pathways of life. The Lord only shows us what we need to see—what is immediately in front of us—to keep us from becoming discouraged. He doesn't want us to fall back because we think we cannot do it. He also doesn't want us to get so far ahead in thought that we become lofty, and do not put in the work necessary to succeed.

In life, it is a great joy when we come to terms with being on a need-to-know basis, trusting and resting in what is immediately in front of us, doing it well, and continuing, no

matter what. God's plans are to prosper you and not to harm you. Live your life for God, and live it to the fullest.

Father, I am honored that you allow me to know joy. I am blessed that you allow me to grow and prosper through your plans and direction. Thank you for loving me and giving your only Son for me. I love you, Father. Amen.

Fawn Weaver
Southern California

Therefore being justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
By whom also we have access by faith into this grace
wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:1-2

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:
if any man hear my voice,
and open the door, I will come in to him,
and will sup with him, and he with me.
To him that overcometh will I grant to sit
with me in my throne, even as I also overcame,
and am set down with my Father in his throne.
He that hath an ear, let him hear what the
Spirit saith unto the churches.

Revelation 3:20-22

Your Invitation

*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh
unto the Father, but by me.
John 14:6*

The Journey Home has carried you on a quest throughout our book, so that you too can know the Heavenly Father as your own loving Father. Throughout the book, you have walked through the book of Romans, a chapter from the New Testament. We have given you one verse from that book of the Bible at the beginning of each chapter, and we have walked you through what is known as the “Romans Road.” We have done this to encourage you, and to provide you with the opportunity to have Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

Our hope is simply that if you do not have Christ as your personal Savior that you would come to know Him through this journey of exploring God’s word through this book. Today, you have the choice to know Him, because God has given you the choice to choose Him. The only question is will you choose to live your life in the fullness and contentment that can only come from Him? There is only one way to do that and it is to ask the Father forgiveness of your sins. If you would like to ask God into your life, you can do that by saying a prayer such as the “Sinner’s Prayer” over on the next page. Our hope and prayer is that this has been your choice today. May God bless you!

The Sinner's Prayer

Dear Lord, I ask you to forgive me of my sins for I know that I am a sinner. I understand that your Word is the Word of the one and only living God. I am grateful to your Son, Jesus, who gave His life on an old rugged cross to save this sinner and to give me eternal life. I believe and understand that by me asking forgiveness of my sins, that you have entered my heart as I have said this prayer. My desire is that as I learn to allow you to live there and be Lord over my life, that I may walk in your likeness.

Lord, It is because of your unfailing love that I can know you as my personal Savior and friend. Today, I ask you, Lord Jesus, to come and live in my heart and soul. I ask you to be Lord of all in my life. Thank you for giving me the choice to choose you. Amen.

Friends, if you have sincerely said this prayer, the Bible teaches us that you are forgiven and that Jesus has come into your heart as your Lord and Savior. Thank you for taking this journey, and for becoming an heir to His throne in Heaven.

*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find;
knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth;
and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

Matthew 7:7-8

Our team hopes that this book has been a special blessing to your individual life. We pray that in some way it has helped you to find your journey home to the Heavenly Father in His great love! Please be on the lookout for further projects like this in the near future. For writer's guidelines or to read more devotionals you may go to our website:

www.KnittedTogetherByGod.com

To order paperback copies of *The Journey Home*, go to www.bookemon.com, and to order e-book versions, go to Amazon or to www.smashwords.com.

Contributing Writers

The following is a list of the contributing writers for this book, appearing in alphabetical order. Any writer listed here may be contacted through an email at: knittedtogetherbygod@gmail.com. Please indicate which author you are contacting and put in your subject line "Contributor Contact." This will help us recognize that you are a reader contacting a specific author. Thank you for your consideration.

PAULINE CREEDEN is a reader, reviewer, writer, and horse trainer! She is a Top Reviewer for Amazon and the staff Entertainment Reviewer for *Faith Filled Family Magazine*. Several of her inspirational articles and devotionals have been published at *Ruby for Women Magazine*, and her book reviews appear on Christianfictionbookreviews.org. Additionally, her short stories have been published at AvenirEclectia.com and *Fear & Trembling Magazine*. Check out her blog at www.fatfreefaith.blogspot.com.

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SUSAN FERGUSON is from Jackson, Mississippi. She works by day as an accountant and is a writer by night. She writes devotionals and non-fiction Christian articles and loves to share her faith through writing. She likes to take Caribbean vacations with her husband and enjoys cooking holiday meals for the entire family. She is a member of www.faithwriters.com.

JEFF HAND is a software developer by career (day) and a writer by passion (night). He is married and has two elementary school-aged boys. Jeff has written newsletter articles, devotionals, and reflections for his local congregation. In 2011, he began teaching Sunday school for high school students. In addition to these congregation activities, Jeff is a long-standing member of the local Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) class. After years of consideration and much encouragement from supporters, Jeff began *Pew Ponderings* (<http://jhand-pewponderings.blogspot.com>), a faith-based blog covering Sunday school questions, devotions, reflections, sermon notes, and anything else a layperson might ponder while sitting in a church pew. Jeff would like to thank, first and foremost, God, who in His grace provided a gift for the written word. He would also like to thank his family (immediate and extended) and other supporters, including two pastors who recognized a God-given gift and gave a nudge.

PHILIP M. HUBER lives with his wife and four children in Syracuse, New York. He enjoys a

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CHRISTINE M. MILLER-RAMEY is the owner and operator of www.KnittedTogetherByGod.com and the founder of In Step Publications. Christine has written many devotionals herself and has had them published online and in books. She enjoys writing romance novels, devotionals, and some poetry. To follow Christine in all of her writing endeavors, you may go to her blog at www.christinemillerramey.blogspot.com and follow her journey there. When she is not busy writing and operating her blogs, she enjoys spending her time with both her family and pets—Harley and Betty in Hilliard, Florida.

L. EVETTE PRATT is a retired HR manager with exceptional experience in various sectors in the field of Business and Construction. With her passion for Start-up Businesses, Graphic Design, and Networking, she shares these gifts in different areas of God's kingdom. Having previously served within the Ministries as an Editor, Singles Ministry Leader, Marketing, and Public Relations Officer, she now spends most of her time sharing the Word of God through Writing, Blogging, and Speaking. Evette strongly believes that the conditions of atmospheres are to respond by lining up to the spoken Word of God to produce a heavenly experience for the Believer, and that even in the midst of tragedy one can find triumph. As she shared one of her favorite quotes, "Loving God is what I do, and God's loving me is why I am." When not locked into Writing, Evette enjoys spending time with her family in the charming city of Nassau, The Bahamas, where she is surrounded by crystal blue waters and lovely nature. For more encouraging devotions on The Power of God by Evette Pratt visit her at www.achangers.blogspot.com or join her at www.ning.it/xP3OVk. Email her at: atmospheric_ch@yahoo.com.

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